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"The Lead Community: A Concept, A Process, A Place", 1991.

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**TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA:
THE COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

LEAD COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Lead Community: A Concept, A Process, A Place

An Overview and Basic Conceptions

A Lead Community is a concept, a process and a place - a community engaged in planning for a comprehensive, far-reaching and systematic improvement of Jewish education.

The CIJE and the Lead Community

Several lead communities will be established and each will enter a partnership with the CIJE committing itself to develop and implement a specific plan of programs and projects in the community.

Content

The community plan must include elements designed to address the 'enabling options' - professional development programs for all educators, recruitment and involvement of key lay leadership and enhanced use of Israel experiences as an educational resource.

Programs

The communities should undertake programmatic initiatives most suited to meet local needs and resources and likely to have a major impact on the scope and quality of Jewish education in the community.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feed-back

Community plans and projects should be carefully monitored and evaluated and feedback provided on an ongoing basis.

Appendix: Recruitment and Selection of Lead Communities

An Overview

A Time to Act, reflects the North American Commission on Jewish Education's recommendation to establish local laboratories for Jewish education as a strategy for bringing about significant change and improvement.

Three to five model communities will be established to demonstrate what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, when the importance of Jewish education is recognized by the community and its leadership, and when the necessary funds are secured to meet additional costs.

These models, called "Lead Communities", will provide a leadership function for other communities throughout North America. Their purpose is to serve as laboratories in which to discover the educational practices and policies that work best. They will function as the testing places for "best practices" - exemplary or excellent programs - in all fields of Jewish education.

Each of the Lead Communities will engage in the process of redesigning and improving the delivery of Jewish education through a wide array of intensive programs.

(A Time to Act, p. 67)

Basic Conceptions

1. The process of change is gradual. A long term project is being undertaken by the CIJE. The Lead Community Project is a means of bringing about meaningful change in Jewish education in North America by addressing those elements thought to be most critical to improvement.
2. Without community support for Jewish education and an approach to deal with the shortage of qualified personnel no systemic change is likely. These are the "building blocks or enabling options" identified by the Commission.
3. The initiative for bringing about community change should come from the local community itself.
4. Each local community will be encouraged to strengthen existing programs and to develop innovative and experimental programs to expand thinking beyond existing ideas and approaches.
5. A local planning mechanism will be responsible for generating plans and ideas and designing programs that have the support of a coalition of the stakeholders-- key institutions and individuals.
4. In order for a community plan for change to be valid and effective it should fulfill two conditions:
 - It must be comprehensive and of sufficient scope to have significant impact on the overall profile of Jewish education.
 - It must ensure high standards of quality. This can be accomplished with the assistance of experts in the field, careful and thorough planning, and appropriate evaluation procedures.
5. The CIJE will assist in designing and field-testing solutions to local problems through the professional and technical support of its staff and consultants and the assistance of the many resources of its co-sponsors-- the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) and the Jewish Educational Services of North America (JESNA)-- the national training institutions, the denominations and the local, regional, and national organizations.

The CIJE and the Lead Community

A coalition of the majority of the local educational institutions should be required to undertake a planning process and to make a commitment to recruit outstanding lay leadership so as to establish a supportive community climate to ensure the success of the plan.

Based on the specific needs of the community and the resources available for implementation each community should propose a specific program that it believes will make a significant impact on the scope and quality of Jewish education.

The CIJE should offer each lead community:

- professional guidance by staff and consultants
- on-going consultation on content and process issues
- liaison to continental and international resources
- facilitation of funding for special projects through the CIJE's relationship with foundations
- assistance in the recruitment of community leadership
- Best Practice Project
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Feed-back

Each community should make specific programmatic choices selected by mutual agreement from a menu prepared by the CIJE. The CIJE menu will include required and optional elements.

The required elements will include:

- activities to "build the profession" including in-service education for all personnel
- recruitment and involvement of outstanding lay leaders for "community support" of Jewish education
- maximum use of Best Practices so as to strengthen existing programs
- additional and enhanced Israel experience programs

Personnel Development:

Communities should develop and implement a plan for the recruitment and training of personnel and for activities to "build the profession". The plan should consider the community's varied settings for formal and informal Jewish education and plan for pre-service and in-service activities for teachers, principals, rabbis and all personnel working in the field, either as professionals or as avocational educators. It should include a plan to recruit and train previously under-utilized community human resources.

Specific examples of personnel development activities include the development of policies and programs to improve salaries and benefits, to develop new career paths and to empower educators by creating new roles for educators in decision-making in schools and in the community.

The CIJE will recommend elements of an effective personnel development program and assist communities in the planning and implementation stages.

Community Support:

Each lead community should launch a major effort at building community support. What is required is leadership at the congregational/school, agency board level and Federation levels. This requirement includes the recruitment of top leadership for financial support for Jewish education so as to create a supportive community climate to influence funding decisions and provide effective leadership for lead community activities.

Some possible approaches to developing stronger leadership have been identified. They include:

- improving the status of leadership in Jewish education
- providing mentors for younger leadership from among the well-established and influential community leadership
- training of school and agency boards through a community based training program
- recruiting leadership from active adult learners
- community leadership development programs designed specifically for Jewish educational leadership

Among the specific activities that should be considered is the adoption of a formal agenda for COMMUNITY SUPPORT that includes:

- new financial commitments with specific appropriate approaches to local fund-raising
- establishment of a formal education "lobby"
- development of regional or inter-communal networks
- formalization of lay-professional dialogues
- public relations efforts

Optional elements may include the enrichment and/or modification of existing programs and the development of innovative and experimental programs for a variety of settings.

The CIJE should formalize its relationship with each lead community specifying the programs/projects to be implemented - the goals, anticipated outcomes, and the additional human and financial resources that the community will make available. The agreement should likewise specify the support that can be expected from the CIJE.

The CIJE should provide each lead community with timely feed-back through the study of programs and projects. At a later stage, the successful programs may be offered to additional communities for replication or modification in other settings. Others may be dropped altogether.

Content

A wide variety of possible options reflecting the commitments, concerns and interests of the commissioners were considered - any one of which could have served as the basis for the Commission's agenda. It was recognized that the options could be usefully divided into two large categories: enabling options and programmatic options.

The Commission decided to focus its work initially on two enabling options as major approaches to change without which other program options were unlikely to achieve their goals. The enabling options are to "build the profession" so as to deal with the shortage of qualified personnel and "the community - its leadership, structures and funding" so as to provide the support essential for community change. Each community will be required first to plan for the "enabling options", the required elements of the community plan.

The Commission identified programmatic areas for intervention as a means to improving existing programs, strengthening institutions and developing innovative and experimental projects. The programmatic areas include the target populations (early childhood through senior citizens), settings and frameworks (informal and formal - e.g., schools, centers and camps) and specific content and methods.

Each community should choose the programmatic areas through which they plan to address these options.

"Enabling options" should be reflected in the programmatic areas selected by the community, those most suited to local needs and conditions.

Two examples help clarify the critical relationship between "enabling options" and specific programs.

- Training programs for principals improve schools.
- Individual schools benefit when supplementary school teachers participate in required in-service training programs.

"As the Lead Communities begin to develop their plans of action the Best Practices inventory would offer a guide to successful programs/sites/curricula which could be adopted in the Lead Communities." (The Best Practices Project by Dr. Barry W. Holtz). Thus a community choosing to undertake a specific program/project will be offered models of successful programs/projects by the CIJE so as to incorporate experience in the field in planning and decision making. The community can then either replicate, modify or develop unique programs, keeping in mind the standards set by these models.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

Ongoing monitoring of progress -- collection and analysis of data -- should assist community leaders, planners and educators to improve and adjust implementation activities in the communities.

The CIJE should establish an Evaluation Project to provide:

- ongoing monitoring of activities and elements of the community plan
- evaluation of progress in appropriate form/s
- a feedback loop(s) to "connect practical results with a process of rethinking, replanning and implementation"

Data will be collected locally and nationally to:

- evaluate the impact and effectiveness of individual programs
- evaluate the effectiveness of the Lead Community Concept as a model for change
- create indicators and a data base to serve as the basis for an ongoing assessment of Jewish education in North America.

It is anticipated that this work may contribute to a periodic "State of Jewish Education Report" as recommended by the Commission.

Research findings provided through the feedback loop(s) will make information available on a continuous basis for decision-making purposes. The feedback loop(s) provide for the rapid exchange of knowledge and the ability to use information in both planning and practice. It is anticipated that this approach will result in ongoing adjustments and adaptations of plans.

UPDATE: NEXT STEPS

During its initial months the CIJE has succeeded in establishing a organization and infrastructure that is now ready to launch work on the recommendations of the Commission. The Senior Policy Advisors and the Board of Directors of the CIJE have held their initial meetings and reviewed preliminary papers and conceptions. The Education Officer has begun work on a full-time basis and a search is underway for the Executive Director and Senior Planner.

Two deliberations were held at the Mandel Institute in Jerusalem - January and July 1991- with CIJE staff, advisors and consultants. A working group of educators and planners has been formed to assist the CIJE in its work.

A first workplan for the CIJE and time line have been established that includes the following elements:

Establishing Lead Communities - as outlined in this paper

Undertaking a Best Practices Projects as outlined in the enclosed CIJE paper by Dr. Barry W. Holtz

A paper now being prepared towards the establishment of a research capability in North America

A project to building community support including the preparation of a strategic plan

Development of an approach to a continental strategy for preparing Jewish educators

Developing and launching a monitoring, evaluation and feedback program for the CIJE

Separate papers will be forthcoming on each of the above elements of the CIJE's program.

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Appendix: The Recruitment and Selection of Lead Communities

The following approach has been proposed for the recruitment and selection of lead communities through a two round screening process.

Application and Selection

Round One: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Following a public announcement and communication to the local federation, which will include information about criteria and the selection process, communities will have six weeks to prepare a letter of intent which will be processed by CIJE staff, reviewed by Senior Policy Advisors and a committee of the Board of Directors.

Selection Criteria:

- A. City Size: minimum Jewish population of 15,000 to maximum Jewish population of 500,000
- B. Commitment
In the Letter of Intent the local federation will be asked to provide evidence of:
 - 1. the community's capability of a joint effort by all elements of the community
 - * 2. commitment to involve all stakeholders
 - 3. an existing planning process
 - 4. initiatives and progress in Jewish education in recent years (5 years)
 - * 5. a serious commitment of lay leadership
 - 6. potential to recruit strong community leaders
 - 7. potential for funding for lead community activities
 - 8. understanding of the importance of creating an environment conducive to innovation and experimentation
 - 9. commitment to developing personnel.
- * Letters of support should be included from a sampling of the stakeholders - educational and communal leaders.

Communities will be selected to participate in the second round.

Following discussion and approval by the Senior Policy Advisors and the Board of Directors, the CIJE staff will begin the recruitment process as outlined above.

Round Two: Formal Application

Communities selected for Round Two will be invited to send representatives to an informational seminar in preparation for Round Two and a more detailed application process that will include a site visit by CIJE staff upon receipt of the completed form.

Following screening by the CIJE staff, comments will be elicited from the Senior Policy Advisors and all applications, materials and comments will be reviewed by a committee of the Board of Directors and recommendations made for approval by the Board.

Timetable for Recruitment and Selection:

1. Requests for Proposals (RFP): early September 1991
2. Round One applications due: October 15, 1991
3. Decision by CIJE Board: mid November 1991
4. Seminar for Round Two Communities: early December 1991
5. Round Two applications due: late January 1992
6. Decision by CIJE Board: by March 1992

